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Little Yellow Rail (*Porzana noveboracensis*) was mentioned, not as being rare, but as seldom collected, probably on account of its small size and skulking disposition.

The paper was illustrated by specimens of the species spoken of belonging to the Academy and Mr. Woodruff.

FRANK C. BAKER, *Secretary.*

SCIENTIFIC NEWS.

It will be of interest to Botanists and Zoologists to learn that a Biological Survey of Alabama has been organized and put into operation. The Survey will be carried on under the auspices of the Alabama Polytechnic Institute, and will be named by the specialists engaged at that institution in the various lines of biological investigation. It will have for its object the study in field and laboratory of all plants and animals occurring in the state and of the various conditions effecting them. The work will be done systematically and thoroughly and all results published. In a region so interesting and little worked as this portion of the Southern United States, careful and extended research will be sure to yield results of the greatest value. Large quantities of material in all groups of plants and animals (especially insects) will be collected and properly prepared. In connection with the Survey there has been founded an Exchange Bureau, from which will be distributed all duplicate material. Anyone desiring to correspond relative to specimens, literature, or work of Survey, should address *The Alabama Biological Survey, Auburn, Alabama.*

The New Monthly Open Court.—With January, 1897, the Chicago *Open Court* celebrates the decennial anniversary of its nativity and more consonantly with the solid character of its contents now appears in the form of a monthly instead of a weekly. Undoubtedly this change will gain more than ever the attention of thoughtful people for *The Open Court*, which is devoted to the high ideal of purifying religion by the methods employed in science,—an aim which it has always reverently but fearlessly pursued.

In the ten years of its existence *The Open Court* has gained the hearty co-operation of a majority of the world's most eminent scientists and thinkers, both orthodox and unorthodox. The subscription-price

to *The Open Court* being reduced to an absolute minimum, its work has been rendered possible only by the large private endowments of Mr. E. C. Hegeler of La Salle, whose contributions to its support have exceeded its net income by ninety-six per cent.

In the present opening number besides the Salutory of the editor expounding the purpose of *The Open Court*, is an extremely significant controversy on Buddhism and Christianity between the Right Rev. Shaku Soyen, delegate of Japan to the Chicago Parliament of Religions, the Rev. Dr. John Henry Barrows, Chairman of the Parliament, and the Rev. F. F. Ellinwood, a prominent Presbyterian clergyman of New York,—a literary symposium realising the idea of a Parliament of Religions extension. A powerful sermon on "Trade and Usury" by Martin Luther, skilfully translated by Professor Carruth, a valiant defence of the claims of Science in Theology by Dr. Cornill, Professor of Old Testament history in Königsberg, Germany, Notes and Reviews of important books complete the contents. With the promise of the first number and its old reputation, *The Open Court* is assured of increased and abiding success. (Annual subscription, \$1.00: The Open Court Publishing Co., Chicago.)

Mr. Herbert Spencer.—Mr. F. H. Collins, of Edgbaston, forwards an address of congratulation to Mr. Herbert Spencer upon the completion of his "System of Synthetic Philosophy," signed by more than 80 noblemen and gentlemen eminent in public life, in literature, and in various branches of learning and science. The signatories request Mr. Spencer to permit them to employ some eminent artist to take his portrait, with a view to its being deposited in one of our national collections. Mr. Spencer, in a letter to Sir Joseph Hooker, complies with the request thus made, explaining the reasons which formerly led him to refuse a similar proposal. Mr. Herkomer, R. A., has undertaken to paint the portrait.